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ARIZONA CORPORATION COMMISSION

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February 8, 2010

Mayor City of Phoenix
Honorable Phil Gordon
Honorable Phoenix City Council Members
200 West Washington Street
Phoenix, Arizona 85003

This letter is in support and concern regarding further proposed funding reductions to the Parks, Recreation and Library Department South Youth Center. The funding lost in the City's revised FY09-10 budget has forced the Parks & Recreation Department to close several centers including the South Phoenix Youth Center.

I am most concerned about the impact of the closure on the community, programs delivered, staff and most importantly, the youth and families. Data reveals that the national award-winning Youth Center has consistently produced incredible and measurable results since 1980.

South Phoenix Youth Center was awarded the 1981 Arizona Parks & Recreation Gene Reid Innovative Award for cutting edge programming for youth, and received recognition by the Annie B. Casey Foundation for its replicated services as part of the City Streets Program. These examples are but a few accomplishments of the South Phoenix Youth Center accomplishments. A permanent closure of the Center will be long term and detrimental for current and future generations. The Center provides services in a variety of areas which includes; social, cultural, employment, recreation and education. The Youth Center Participants and graduates are an integral part of our community and nation and are represented in every strata of society.

Past participants are current Phoenix City government employees, community volunteers, authors, artists, professional athletes, entertainers and more.

According to a Southwest Behavioral Health 2009 South Mountain Assessment Report, the following summarizes key issues impacting on this community. In summary; there is a perceived availability of substances and firearms; poor family management; attitudes favorable to substance use and anti-social behaviors; lack of pro-social activities; and, academic failure. Additionally this community has been affected by job losses, foreclosures, crime and violence.

The following are highlights of key areas impacting on youth residing in this community.

- The drop-out rate for Phoenix was 22% compared to 39% for the South Mountain area

- Nearly 22 % of families live below poverty
- 89.7% of youth attending Roosevelt Elementary School District schools are eligible for free or reduced-price breakfasts and lunches
- According to the City of Phoenix City Council Neighborhood Stabilization Report (12/08) Laveen/Estrella and the South Mountain are of 4 areas with the highest home foreclosure rates for the City of Phoenix
- The Phoenix Police Department Precinct Summary for December, 2008 indicated that the area had the highest number of violent crimes (homicide, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault) representing 19% of the City of Phoenix Violent crimes. The area had the most aggravated assaults and sexual assaults and the second highest rate of homicide and robbery.
- Most residents have a high school education or lower. According to American Community Survey Census Date, 2005-2007, 78% of Phoenix residents 25 years and older held a high school diploma, 60% of South Mountain residents had graduated from high school.

I am requesting that you reconsider reductions and/or the elimination of funding for the South Phoenix Youth Center. As you may note in the information above, the Youth Center is one of the pillars of the South Phoenix community and remains critical to its future. This is more apparent now as we are witnessing unprecedented economic and social issues.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sandra D. Kennedy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized loop at the end.

SANDRA D. KENNEDY
Arizona Corporation Commission